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THE MESSAGE AND THE MAN

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER

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BY

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER, D.D., F.R.G.S.

CANDIDATE SECRETARY

STUDENT VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT

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THE MESSAGE AND THE MAN

A missionary is not only one who is sent, but one who is sent with a message. The true missionary must not only have a message but he must be the living embodiment of that message and the incarnation of the truth which he teaches. Like an ambassador at a foreign court, he must not only carry credentials from his own government, but he must be loyal to that government and represent its ideals and ideas to those to whom he goes. The knowledge and experience of this truth make the missionary. He stands as a witness to the truth which he possesses, and proclaims it by his life as well as by his lips.

If the man who goes out to the Orient has no larger and fuller message in regard to God and His dealings with men than that already possessed by those who ardently believe the non-Christian religions, it is perfectly evident that when he comes in contact with those to whom he is sent the overflow of faith will be in the wrong direction; and it is also clear that unless he knows by personal experience what the Truth can do in the transformation of his own character and in conquering his own

temptations, he cannot help others. The man who believes neither in revelation nor inspiration and meets a Mohammedan who fully believes that God has spoken and that we have His word as our sufficient guide to being made whole, is looked upon with pity because he has no real message to give. The Hindu Pundit would be able to demonstrate both the reasonableness and the necessity of a divine incarnation to the man who denied that it was possible for God to appear in the flesh, and even the Buddhist or Animist might contribute some element of religious faith to the out and out so-called "Christian agnostic."

There is some truth in all the non-Christian religions, and much good in many of them. No one is so ready to admit this as the man who knows from his own personal experience the full power of Christianity. He who knows the superiority of what he possesses is never afraid of comparisons, but the man without conviction has no certain standard by which to test the truth of other systems.

Christianity is the *one* religion, and its message—Christ Incarnate, Crucified, Risen and Glorified—is the one thing needed to evangelize the world. Unbelief does not trouble itself by confuting any other religion than Christianity. We never hear of agostics or skeptics writing

against Mohammedanism or Buddhism with the avowed purpose of proving their falsehood. This is a remarkable tribute to the unique character of Christianity and indirectly proves that its demands are also unique. If a man accepts Christianity, he must live according to its teachings or be accused of hypocrisy, but in other religions faith and morality are either loosely connected or utterly divorced from each other. Because Christianity claims to be the absolute religion and affirms that it is a matter of spiritual life or death whether men accept it, opponents can not leave it alone; they know Christianity will not leave them alone. It is this unique character of the message that makes the missionary's sphere as universal as the needs of humanity.

Christians may differ among themselves in regard to the interpretation of the non-essentials, but in regard to the fundamentals of the Christian faith they are agreed. The least common denominator of the Gospel as Paul understood it is given by him in these words: "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved; I make known, I say, in what words I preached it unto you, if ye hold it fast, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also

received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." He tells the Corinthians that this Gospel is sufficient for their salvation. The man who does not hold with conviction even this simple statement of the faith surely has no message large enough and strong enough to warrant a journey to the antipodes. Nor will it profit him to have only an intellectual apprehension of these truths. He must have a vital experience of their power, or his message will be without sincerity and without spiritual result.

When the earnest seeker asks "What is Christianity?" he has a right to an answer that, however brief, shall be definite and authoritative, and no man is qualified to attempt to answer so important a question for the seeker after truth unless he himself has tested in his own experience the principles of the faith set forth in his message. The main source of our knowledge of things spiritual is the Bible, and no man can give its central message unless he believes it true. You cannot read even the first chapter of Mark without seeing that it proclaims the superhuman character of our faith, the deity of Jesus Christ and the necessity for the atonement. There are some things which are so fundamental

that to remove them is to overthrow the whole superstructure.

The struggle is an old one. The fight has always been against the supernatural claims of Christianity. Those who are animated merely by the altruistic spirit—the very product of Christianity——even though they have a Christian heritage in Christian lands, want to accept the fruit, instead of realizing that the fruit depends on the root, and this has always resulted in a weakening faith and a curtailment or adulteration of the Gospel.

"In apostolic days," said the Bishop of Liverpool at the British Student Volunteer Conference in 1908, "men advocated a Gospel without the Cross. But St. Paul would have none of it. In the fourth century Arius taught a Christianity without a perfectly divine Savior, and the Church would not have it. In the fifteenth century the Renaissance intoxicated by the discovery of Greek and Roman literature, despised the 'jargon of St. Paul' and would have paganized Christianity, but the Reformation brought Northern Europe back to the Scriptures and to the Christ. Today men are proclaiming a Gospel without the supernatural. They are asking us to be content with a perfect human Christ; with a Bethlehem where no miracle was wrought; with a Calvary which saw sublime

self-sacrifice, but no atonement for sin; with a sepulchre from which no angel's hand rolled away the stone. But we must have none of it. We will hold fast, we will transmit the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We will hand down to our children, we will proclaim to all the tribes of the earth, Christ Incarnate, Atoning, Risen, Ascended, our Intercessor at God's right hand, waiting to come again to judge the quick and the dead."

The man who thinks he can help evangelize the world without faith in Christ and experience of His power will disappoint those who send him, and will himself regret ever having attempted to do the work of a missionary. Many blighted, disappointed lives are explained by this fact.

Throughout all the East thousands have lost faith in their old religions, and are longing for guidance, not to new doubts, but to a new faith. The spiritual hunger of men in Korea will not be satisfied by philanthropic effort for their temporal needs. The educated classes in Egypt who have lost faith in the Koran as the very Word of God will not find rest for their souls and help in temptation from those who have not tested the truth of the gospel of Christ and are prepared to present the living Christ with that confidence which is the result of per-

sonal knowledge of His power to enable men to live the victorious life. Men everywhere are hungering for the living Christ.

There is no one who can guide them but the man who has that thorough grip on the fundamentals of the Christian faith which comes as a result of having experienced its power.

It is strange that this should not appear axiomatic to those who are filled with philanthropic love for humanity and think that they can do good service on the foreign field. Yet there are men who think that they can help evangelize the world without the message of the Gospel in their hearts and in their life. A missionary candidate recently wrote: "I do not feel free to force my own individual opinion on my fellow man, nor do I think that by proselyting the heathen we benefit him. Yet, etc.,"—Such a man lacks the qualification of a missionary. The missionary does not force his individual opinion on any man. His convictions are the product of his experience. His experience came when Truth made him its captive and its advocate. He has a message because he has accepted the Truth and his own life has been mastered by its power.

There are also men who think that character has little relation to creed, and that the non-Christian world will find Jesus Christ without

the message of the Cross. Such an one recently wrote: "I should like to take the position of a medical man rather than of a missionary, as I am not only not versed along religious lines, but am primarily a medical man at heart. I believe that character is a more important consideration than mere religious belief. I attend church, but am not a member, and am thoroughly of the 'new school' in my beliefs concerning the Christian faith."

There is nothing to prevent a man with an altruistic spirit going out to practice medicine in a non-Christian country in the same way as he practices in this country, namely, at his own charges. But it is not reasonable to expect a Mission Board, organized for the express purpose of giving a knowledge of Jesus Christ to the non-Christian world, to send him out at their expense.

A medical practitioner, teacher or an engineer might do excellent service on the foreign field, as well as at home along philanthropic lines, although the fierce temptations of the Orient and the non-Christian atmosphere make it very hard for any one not dominated by the life of Christ and who has not tested His power to retain moral character.

The non-Christian world, however, needs not only medical skill, but the skill of reaching men's

hearts with a message of hope. The only men who have worked modern miracles on the foreign field have been the men with a message.

This does not mean that the one message is not expressed in diverse ways and by every possible method. "There are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit" uses them to the one end, that of bringing men to Christ and Christ into the lives of men. "There is only one aim before us missionaries," said Donald Fraser, after experience in the heart of Africa to the students at the Nashville Student Volunteer Convention, "it is the presentation of Christ to the world. I do not for a moment fancy that such an aim limits in any way the methods which we may use. Everything which elevates the social conscience, which purifies administration, which sanctifies laws—every method of that sort may become an avenue to lead to Jesus Christ. But this I say, that these things by themselves are useless; that unless these avenues lead directly to the living Christ, we are only doing a temporal work which will not last through the ages. I say, too, that if we who lead along these avenues are not to end in a maze, we must step side by side with Jesus Christ, that the people may at last reach to Him. Let me press it. The supreme end of the missionary cannot be attained by anything else than by spiritual methods, by spiritual ambitions, the

elevation of the human race until it returns to God, and the face of God is again formed in man."

It was Henry Martyn who, when a Mohammedan was speaking derisively of Christ, said: "I could not endure existence if Christ were not glorified. It would be hell for me if He were always to be thus dishonored." Raymund Lull, Robert Moffat, James Gilmour, David Livingstone, John G. Paton, James Chalmers, Grenfell of Labrador, and Grenfell of the Congo, with all the other heroes of the Cross, have been able to say with the Apostle Paul, "We preach Christ crucified." Every one of them, however diverse in call, talents and environment, attained missionary success because they had a message and that message the Gospel, which they preached not as a theory or creed, but as their very life.

A man who has mere opinions and no convictions wrought out in his own life's experience as regards the Christ is a man without a message. The man who expects to go out and represent Christianity in the non-Christian world must carry with him the consciousness of the power of Christ enabling him hour by hour to live the victorious life. It is the one indispensable part of the missionary's outfit and the one that convinces the other man of the truth of the message.

Some years ago a missionary was preaching in

a hospital. He spoke of the love of Christ and endeavored to set forth its length and breadth and depth and height, using the words of the Apostle as the basis of what he was saying. He endeavored to present the subject simply so that it could be understood by the uneducated people who had gathered in the waiting-room of the hospital.

At the close of the address, a Moslem, unprepossessing in appearance, who had evidently not been to the hospital before, stepped forward and with Bedouin boldness exclaimed bluntly,—"I understood all you told us, because I have seen that sort of a man myself."

In the conversation that followed, this man, who came from a city about a thousand miles distant, began to describe, in response to inquiries, a stranger who had come to his city and took up his residence there. The Moslem told how he had watched the stranger.

"Why," he said, "he was a strange man. When people did wrong to him, he did good to them. He looked after sick folks and prisoners, and everybody who was in trouble. He even treated negro slave boys and sick Arabs kindly. He was always good to other people. Lots of them never had such a friend as he was. He used to take long journeys in the broiling sun to help them. He seemed to think one man was as good as an-

other. He was a friend to all kinds of people. He was just what you said."

It surprised the missionary that this rude uneducated man had recognized in the description which he had given of the love of Christ, a Christian missionary; and greater was his surprise later to find that it was his own brother who some years before had opened a mission in that city. That Mohammedan had not only heard the message of the missionary, but he had seen it exemplified in the missionary's life. What higher tribute could be paid to the daily life of one of God's servants than the fact that an ignorant Mohammedan, studying him day by day, recognized in his daily life the principles of the gospel of Christ!

The Christian Church has established and supported the missionary enterprise to give the non-Christian world the Gospel of Christ as it has been received and interpreted by that Church. Those who do not accept the message, though they may call themselves members of a church, have nothing to take to the mission field and manifestly, instead of representing the Church, they *mis*-represent the church that sends them.

The Student Volunteer Movement has not only emphasized the highest physical and intellectual qualifications of candidates for missionary work, but has also even more strongly

insisted that they be spiritually qualified. Only spiritual men are a real acquisition and reinforcement in the conduct of a spiritual enterprise. Unless the missionary's first love is his love for Christ crucified and exalted, he will lose it, grow lukewarm and finally cold when surrounded by the atmosphere of heathenism. The real missionary spirit is the Holy Spirit. He Himself gave us the message in the Scriptures and in the Christ enables us to interpret it to others. Not until a man's life has beeen transformed by the power of the message he goes to proclaim is he ready to endure the hardship and to be patient under the adversity which is sure to be his experience as a missionary. He must know that the Christian faith is a reality; that his faith is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He believes that God has worked miracles in the past and can work miracles today. He knows that Christianity in its origin, history and effect is from first to last supernatural. The man who denies its supernatural character cannot be a true missionary of the Christ, even though he go to the mission field. The missionary spirit will not abide without the missionary message. The giants in faith have been the giants in faithfulness.

Faith of our fathers! living still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword;
O, how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free;
How sweet would be their children's fate,
If they, like them, could die for thee!
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

Faith of our fathers! we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife;
And preach thee, too, as love knows how,
By kindly words and virtuous life;
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

Frederick W. Faber